

Prayer Alert

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www.prayer-alert.net | editor@prayer-alert.net

It is time for You to act, Lord; Your law is being broken. (Psalm 119:126)

We are pleased to enclose this week's edition of Prayer Alert.

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Thank you for partnering with us in praying for the nations.

Blessings,

David Fletcher and the Prayer Alert Team

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Praise Reports

[Comic Relief reality check](#)

Comic Relief will stop sending celebrities to Africa after criticism that stars like Stacey Dooley were going to Africa as 'white saviours'. The charity will also stop using images of starving people or critically ill children to portray the continent, it has announced. Instead, its fundraising appeals will be made by local film-makers with a 'more authentic perspective'. Sir Lenny Henry, who co-founded Comic Relief in 1985, welcomed the move; saying, 'A lot has changed over Comic Relief's 35 years, and so the way we raise money and talk about the issues and the people we are here to support, must change as well. African people don't want us to tell their stories for them. What they need is more agency, a platform and partnership.' The films will explore issues including mental health, climate change and forced marriages.

Praise: God for the 'much-needed step forward'. Pray for an end to unhelpful labels, and giving voices to African people. (Proverbs 22:2)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-54716750

[Olympic star's daughter upheld by faith](#)

'Volleyball has taught me many valuable life lessons about integrity, hard work and perseverance, but my athletic experiences and lessons learned pale in comparison to my greatest passion, living a life committed to the person of Jesus Christ,' said Jenny the daughter of 1960 decathlete gold-medal winner Rafer Johnson. Jenny grew up in the world of sports and joined a highly competitive UCLA college programme. 'When I made it to the collegiate level I was just learning how to own my faith and what it means to have God in my sport, that they're not separate things' She had a Christian coach who encouraged her to keep up her Christian testimony. As she accepted the challenge, she got even better at volleyball and became the team captain. Her team won All-Tournament Team honours. Later, she and her partner won the silver medal at the beach volleyball world championships in Marseille.

Praise: God that in forcefully vigorous and competitive atmospheres Jenny's faith and witness grew. (Hebrews 11:1)

More: godreports.com/2020/10/daughter-of-famous-olympic-star-made-her-own-mark-upheld-by-faith/

British Isles

[Christian groups demand 'safe and legal' channel routes](#)

Christian refugee campaigners have demanded that the French and UK governments provide a safe and legal way for people to escape their countries after French authorities said a five-year-old, an eight-year-old and two adults died when their vessel sank off the French coast. The people were trying to cross to the UK, despite 18mph wind gusts. Fifteen people are hospitalised in Calais and Dunkirk. There are ongoing searches for any others caught up in the tragedy. Clare Moseley, who founded the Christian refugee charity Care4Calais, called for the incident to be a 'wake-up call' for those in power in the UK and France. She said, 'We are grieving for the victims; we stand in sympathy and solidarity with their families and friends. It is cruel and horrifying that young children are among the victims.' Boris Johnson has offered the French authorities support as they investigate the incident.

Pray: for provision of a safe and legal process for refugees to have their UK asylum claims heard. (Psalm 91:4)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/christian-groups-demand-safe-and-legal-routes-for-asylum-seekers-after-migrant-boat-deaths

Free school meals a biblical principle

Steve Chalke has urged the Government to reverse its decision not to extend the free school meals over the holidays until at least Easter. 'If we believe that we have to provide these children with free school meals, because otherwise they lack the nutrition to be able to grow and thrive and study and succeed during school term times; do we imagine that they can exist on thin air through the six weeks of the summer, or the weeks of Christmas, Easter and half terms? We need to provide a steady ongoing care.' Currently businesses, local authorities, and community groups have set up to provide thousands of free meals for children in need.

Pray: for God to prompt the Government to take the much-needed action so that vulnerable children are catered for and never go hungry. (Matthew 25:35)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/it-s-a-biblical-responsibility-let-alone-a-political-one-steve-chalke-backs-calls-for-free-school-meals-during-all-holidays

Nazanin in court again

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was summoned to court in Iran, according to her family, who said she has been told to pack a bag as she will be returned to prison following a hearing on 2 November. Her local MP Tulip Siddiq said the timing of the trial raised 'serious concerns' as it follows the postponement of a court hearing about the UK's historic debt to Iran. She added, 'Nazanin has once again been treated with utter contempt and I am extremely concerned about her future and wellbeing. The fact that she has been told to pack a bag for prison ahead of her court hearing doesn't fill me with confidence that this will be anything close to a fair trial. The timing of this development alongside the postponement of the court hearing raises serious concerns.'

Pray: for the debt issue to be resolved quickly so that the cycle of proceedings can end and Nazanin is released. Also pray for UK officials' eligibility to be present at Nazanin's trial. (Isaiah 30:18)

More: www.hamhigh.co.uk/news/politics/free-nazanin-zaghari-ratcliffe-summons-court-debt-iran-dominic-raab-1-6905311

Christians petition to end racial inequality

A group of black leaders from across the country, representing many denominations or none and pulled together by the Baptist Union president, have looked at ways of showing solidarity against the real injustices experienced by people of colour in our communities. Petitioning the government is one of those ways. They are encouraging people to sign a parliamentary petition calling for the government to implement recommendations previously raised to tackle the issue. They aim to attract 100,000 signatures so that the petition can be debated in parliament.

Pray: for people of faith or none to cause the systemic injustice to stop by signing the petition. (John 7:24)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/christians-urged-to-sign-petition-to-end-racial-inequality-in-the-uk

Brexit: plenty of predictions, no decisions

Michael Gove told the Welsh Brexit minister that Britain could 'no longer be bound by the Common Fisheries Policy' and won't back down on its demands. Spain and Gibraltar want a last-minute deal to avoid having a hard border after Brexit. However a Spanish diplomatic source said they have stumbled on 'a lack of political will' in London. Ireland's foreign minister claimed that a trade deal is now 'likely' in the next two weeks, while warning 'major trade disruption would be the 'new reality' even if a UK-EU deal is struck. Bloomberg (an international news agency) thinks that the Brexit negotiators have made good progress in London this week, raising hopes they could 'inch' towards a deal by early November. People 'familiar with the discussions' claim that the two sides have begun work on the text of an agreement covering level playing field issues, and are close to finalising a joint document covering state aid mechanism.

Pray: for an end to the 'tactical games' on final agreements, and for the outcome to produce God's purposes for the nations. (Romans 13:1b)

More: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-news-live-today-eu-deal-boris-johnson-update-latest-b1391746.html

Hospitals - second wave rolling in

The British Association of Critical Care Nurses said that we may have the beds, equipment and Nightingale spaces, but we have limited staff numbers. It won't take much this winter to reach a crisis point (current new transmissions are 96,000 daily). The second wave is placing an ever greater toll on UK hospitals. There are currently over 1,000 Covid admissions daily. Hospitals have started cancelling routine treatments, or announcing some treatments will have to stop. Although admissions are up, they're nowhere near the numbers last spring. At one point then, 3,000+ patients were admitted daily. Instead, we see a gradual rise. Winter usually has 1,000 people admitted daily for respiratory problems. It is predicted the 2021 flu season will be mild, but we do not know if it will add to the coronavirus workload. Medical staff all share the feeling of exhaustion that has been heightened by long-standing concerns about staff shortages, and deep resentment about pay and conditions. [See https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-54623919](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-54623919)

Pray: for health managers with the very difficult job of managing staff shortages, social distancing, PPE requirements, and segregating Covid and non-Covid patients. (Isaiah 40:29)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-54712003

Christmas Covid constraints can't be predicted

Gerge Eustice, the environment secretary, has said it's too early to say what Covid rules will be in place by Christmas. He warned that people 'may not be able to get together in the larger groups that they normally would'. Opposition parties have called for coronavirus rules to be the same across all four UK nations this Christmas. Sage member Sir Mark Walport has said there is little to feel reassured about. He added that there are still many vulnerable people, and 'it's certainly not unrealistic to think there could be 25,000 people in hospital with Covid by the end of next month. We are better at treating coronavirus but the country is still relatively early in the second wave and there is a significant lag between getting the infection and potentially dying.'

Pray: for the public to avoid frustrations around restrictions and accept we have to control the spread of the virus. (Hebrews 13:17a)
More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-54713802

Europe

Europe: second wave warning

Europe became the coronavirus epicentre in March; then the outbreak subsided in the summer, allowing many to travel and gather in large groups. Now a second wave of infection is wreaking havoc - with over 1.3 million cases in the last 7 days. France, Italy, Spain, and the UK are grappling with record numbers of new cases that could soon dwarf the out-of-control spring outbreaks. Even though Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic staved off massive spring outbreaks, they now have an unprecedented number of new cases. Europe accounts for 22% of all new infections worldwide. Many city hospitals are swamped and struggle to source life-saving equipment. Europe's centre for disease prevention and control warned against complacency, noting that transmission is as yet mostly between the young. Everyone must obey lockdown rules to keep the European death rate low. See also <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/covid-19-risk-assessment-increased-transmission-thirteenth-update>

Pray: for healthcare services to cope with the deteriorating situation, and for communities to take their responsibilities within health and safety rules seriously for as long as necessary. (Titus 3:1)

More: www.gzeromedia.com/what-were-watching-europes-brutal-second-wave-protests-in-iraq-tough-talk-from-turkey

Europe: second wave rebellion

Europe's coronavirus restrictions have sparked civil unrest, turning violent, across a number of countries. Civilians are refusing to submit to new strict coronavirus rules. Turin demonstrators took to smashing windows and using smoke bombs, and threw bottles at police officers. In Naples protesters clashed with police in demonstrations against an 11pm to 5am curfew. Southern regions are worst affected by stricter measures. Italians call the shutdowns an injustice. Spanish protesters in Barcelona took to the streets to denounce the second state of emergency in six months. Prague police officers resorted to tear gas and water cannons to break up violent protests. Paris and Marseille also saw protests after a countrywide state of emergency was declared. Anti-lockdown demonstrations are a regular weekend occurrence in London. Willingness by law-abiding citizens to comply with complex regulations is beginning to fray. Only 39% in the UK approve of the government Covid policies.

Pray: for a law-abiding peaceful atmosphere to replace aggressive outbreaks of lawlessness. (Romans 13:3)

More: www.express.co.uk/news/world/1353086/EU-coronavirus-news-europe-coronavirus-restrictions-state-of-emergency-france-italy-ont

Brussels: objections to new farming policy

Thousands of climate activists added their names to a Greta Thunberg campaign asking the European Commission to retract a farming policy which would make it impossible to reach the EU's climate goals. Greta called on her followers to sign an open letter to EU leaders after the European Parliament endorsed the proposal across the bloc. The letter said that on 23 October they let us down once again, in voting for a dirty deal which betrays commitments to the Paris agreement and to justice and to democracy.

Pray: for the voices of climate change activists to be heard and acted upon. (Leviticus 25:23-24)

More: www.france24.com/en/europe/20201025-thousands-of-climate-activists-appeal-to-brussels-to-withdraw-farm-policy

Worldwide

Pakistan: Christian sentenced to death for blasphemy

In Pakistan, false accusations of blasphemy are widespread and often motivated by personal vendettas or religious hatred. Accusations have the potential to spark mob lynchings, vigilante murders, and mass protests. Recently the wife and family of Asif Pervaiz went into hiding after Pervaiz was sentenced to death for allegedly committing blasphemy. Pervaiz was handed the death sentence on 8 September, nearly seven years after his arrest. 'She is in hiding because she feels threatened,' said Release International, an organisation that supports persecuted Christians. For the sad story of the family's ordeal, click the 'More' button.

Pray: for the church in Pakistan to keep the family safe and for justice to prevail (Matthew 5:10)

More: www.persecution.org/2020/10/25/family-christian-sentenced-death-blasphemy-pakistan-goes-hiding/

Global: prayer campaign for a breakthrough church

'Contend' is a 21-day prayer campaign, from 4 to 25 November, seeking God for a breakthrough in His global Church surrounding an increase of mission mobilisation across church structures, moving mission from the periphery to its rightful place - at the centre. Prayer materials are now available in numerous languages to help us prepare for the start of the prayer campaign. Daily videos are available with the prayer points in English.

Pray: for millions to contend together for God's global church to experience increased devotion to Jesus, and for mission mobilisation. (Psalm 85:6)

More: www.globalmmi.net/contend-videos

Nigeria: police chief vows to take back streets

Protests against police brutality subsided after a violent crackdown: see (<https://prayer-alert.net/pa-pray/regions/worldwide/item/13486-nigeria-police-shoot-anti-brutality-protesters>) Now the police chief has ordered more police resources after the curfew gave way to widespread vandalism and looting, including government food warehouses stripped bare. Shopping malls, TV stations, and banks were targeted, and also retail stores in popular Lagos shopping districts. Violence and looting have been reported in most states. Amnesty International said, 'The turmoil has seen the worst street violence since Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999. Wealthy politicians and individuals have been looted, emboldening hoodlums that crimes of this magnitude are achievable. In an effort to quell unrest, the government announced that the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) would be disbanded, and promised a host of reforms. But demonstrators are sceptical of government promises [without clearly-specified timeframes](#)

(<https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2020/oct/28/the-fight-to-endsars-in-nigeria>). Pray for the police to successfully and peacefully prevent further hooliganism. See also <https://nairametrics.com/2020/10/25/endsars-hoodlums-loot-yakubu-dogaras-house-in-jos/>

Pray: for President Muhammadu Buhari to establish economic and social justice, and honour his promise to disband SARS. (Proverbs 24:24-25)

More: www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/world/africa/Nigeria-protests.html

Thailand: Christians rise above political unrest

Conditions are ripe for another military takeover in Thailand. There have been 13 coups since the 20th century began. Today, any conflict between pro-democracy demonstrators and monarchy supporters could give the military an excuse to take control. Led by students, ongoing pro-democracy protests have been largely peaceful. Demonstrators want the current prime minister to resign, and they are calling for constitutional reform. Protestors appealed to Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday after marching to the German embassy in Bangkok. Supporters of the Thai kingdom criticised this youthful movement saying, 'Without a monarchy, there would be a civil war'. A lot of people trying to stand up for their lives and rights have others opposing them, leading to outbreaks of violence which are destroying society but also presenting a unique Gospel opportunity. The local church intends to be an agent of peace. Pray for Thai believers to stand out as peacemakers, drawing many to Christ.

Pray: for the small fledgling Thai church to advance the Gospel to a nation full of unreached people groups. (Isaiah 57:15b)

More: www.mnnonline.org/news/thai-christians-rise-above-political-unrest/

Syria: doctors expect Covid catastrophe

Doctors say Covid-19 is now rampant in the refugee camps of Idlib, north-west Syria. The number of positive coronavirus cases rose tenfold in this region last month. Aid agencies say that due to a lack of testing, the real figure is expected to be much higher. In March the UN, aid workers, and doctors began to give stark warnings that camps for the displaced in this area of Syria could be devastated by a coronavirus outbreak. At that time they said 100,000 might die unless medical supplies arrived urgently. See (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-middle-east-52054452>) Pray for nations to be generous in their giving, and for the aid agencies to be better funded as they work to distribute much-needed equipment, testing resources and medical advice to save lives. See <https://www.dec.org.uk/>

Pray: for God to have mercy and help the sick, and rebuild shattered communities. (Psalm 86:3)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-middle-east-54697587

USA: police kill a black man, causing protests and riots

Philadelphia is critical to next week's presidential election. This week hundreds of protesters have been marching through the city demanding racial justice after police killed Walter Wallace, a black man suffering a mental health crisis. Police shot him because he wouldn't drop a knife. A police spokeswoman said that Wallace advanced towards them and they fired fourteen shots, hitting Mr Wallace in the shoulder and chest. She added, 'One of the officers drove him to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead'. This statement is contradicted by bystanders and Mr Wallace's family lawyer, who said that the family called for an ambulance because of his bipolar disorder. Mr Wallace's father said, 'Why didn't they use a taser?' The marches began peacefully but became more confrontational as the evening drew on. Protesters are looting and ransacking businesses. The National Guard has been deployed with officers in riot gear.

Pray: for a swift, transparent resolution for the sake of the Wallaces. May difficult questions be honestly answered to create a calmer atmosphere, with justice being administered. (Proverbs 12:22)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-54710244

USA, South Asia: storms, hurricanes, floods

Louisiana and Mississippi were hit by two hurricanes and two tropical storms already this year; before recovering they are being hit again, by Hurricane Zeta (<https://www.cbsnews.com/video/hurricane-zeta-makes-landfall-in-louisiana-as-a-category-2-storm/#x>), which is intensifying into a stronger-category storm as it moves north. Pray for five million residents preparing for the eye of the storm and the repair of damaged voting sites with the election days away. Across Indonesia high tides caused by the La Nina phenomenon in the Pacific has caused dozens of landslides and widespread flooding across most of 17,000 islands where millions of people live who are also bracing for further monsoon floods. Pray for emergency workers and residents, already battling the new coronavirus. May God assist them in responding to crises. A landslide at a coal mine on Sumatra killed 11 miners (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/landslide-indonesia-miners-killed-flooding-b1221653.html>). After heavy rainfall over Vietnam a landslide killed 14 at an army barracks, burying many more. Typhoon Molave has now made landfall in Vietnam.

Pray: for those fixing downed power lines and supporting those with power cuts. Also, pray for those removing debris from streets and supporting families with damaged homes. (Joshua 1:9)

More: edition.cnn.com/2020/10/28/asia/vietnam-typhoon-molave-intl-hnk/index.html

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